

LEHI CITY PARK PAVILION LEHI RODEO GROUNDS

Constructed: 1900

Address: 100 North Fifth West

Present owner: Lehi City Corporation

Lehi's earliest outdoor festivities were held in the streets, the old Tithing Yard on Main and Third West, Murdock Resort, and Gilchrist Grove on State Street and Third East

To satisfy the citizens desire to have a local park, Lehi city councilman, Parley Austin, in the summer of 1900 was directed to "try and buy the ground known as the Beck lot near the D. and R.G. Depot as cheap as possible not to pay over Fifteen hundred Dollars." This historic site of the original Evansville settlement had a beautiful grove of black willow trees on the property. This was an important consideration as shade was at a premium on sweltering summer days.

The city borrowed \$2,000 to meet the purchase price and provide improvements. On 17 July 1900, 225 workers turned out and constructed a baseball diamond and grandstand, laid out a bicycle track, erected a fence, and built a dance floor. A tie railing was also put up on the west side of the park for use as a hitching post.

The first celebration in City Park on the 24th of July, 1900, consisted of a parade, program, and sporting events. workmen began constructing a pavilion as soon as the holiday ended. Lehi city council minutes for the period note that some of the work was volunteer, but most of it was done by employed carpenters. Those included John, Amor, and Edison Whipple, Alphonso Wilcox, David Winn, George Goates, Abe Mayberry, James Gaddie and Monroe Wilson.

The *Pavilion* was completed by September. Though the large forty-six-by-eighty-foot frame building had a sixty-five-by-thirty-five-foot dance floor, some people were critical of its size even before completion. "The dancing

part of the community,” noted the 2 August 1900 *Lehi Banner*, “seem to think that the new pavilion at the park should be larger . . . they want it enlarged to 60 x 100.” Others were critical of the building’s design. One writer declared it “looked more like a barn both inside and out than like a place of amusement,” while another likened it “unto a great hay barn waiting for the doors to be sawed in the gables for the introduction of the hay.”

Despite the cynics, the Pavilion became a popular center for a multitude of civic, religious, and social gatherings. Virtually all 4th and 24th of July celebrations were held in City Park for more than a decade. This was in addition to the usual array of basketball games, church activities, Old Folks parties, family reunions, and political rallies.

Just fourteen years after being built, the Pavilion had become a “white elephant” for the city. Dancers were flocking to the new Smuin Dancing Academy. It was finally decided in October of 1914 that it would be used for an M.I.A. gymnasium and roller skating rink. In March of 1919 the well-used building was demolished and the salvaged materials used to build the Memorial Building.

As Wines Park’s popularity for picnics and reunions grew, the city began deliberations on what to do with City Park. High School Principal, D.J. Mitchell, suggested that it be made into a standard athletic field with quarter-mile cinder race track, football field, enlarged baseball diamond, and improved grandstands. Although the city council voted favorably on this project, the athletic field was constructed just west of the Memorial Building instead. City Park became the Lehi Rodeo Grounds in 1933 when the grandstand, chutes, and bleachers from the Israel Evans Ranch were moved to the site. During the past fifty-six years, Lehi’s rodeo facilities, managed by the Lehi Civic Improvement Association since 1941, have emerged as one of the finest arenas in the state. The Lehi Roundup Rodeo, traditionally held during the last weekend of June, has evolved into the town’s most popular entertainment event. It is attended each year by thousands of citizens and visitors.